

## Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 BEIRUT 02258 01 OF 02 121058Z  
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W  
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R 120925Z MAY 77  
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4000  
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN  
AMEMBASSY CAIRO  
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS  
AMEMBASSY JIDDA  
USINT BAGHDAD

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 BEIRUT 2258

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PFOR LE US  
SUBJ: U.S. ROLE IN LEBANON

1. SUMMARY: THERE FOLLOW SOME OBSERVATIONS ON THE U.S. ROLE IN LEBANON. BRIEFLY, THE LEBANESE ARE IN NEED OF REASSURANCE, AND ARE COMFORTED BY THE THOUGHT WE ARE INTERVENING ON THEIR BEHALF. ALTHOUGH OUR INTERVENTIONS MAY BE MODEST, THEY HAVE HAD AN IMPORTANT, POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECT. PLAYING THIS GAME MEANS MAINTAINING A HIGH PROFILE. IN DECIDING HOW HARD TO PLAY IT, IT WOULD BE USEFUL TO KNOW WHERE LEBANON FITS IN OUR SCALE OF PRIORITIES. IN THE MEANTIME, OUR CURRENT POLICIES SEEM TO BE WORKING. (THIS IS THE FOURTH AND LAST PRE-CONSULTATION TELEGRAM.) END SUMMARY.

2. LEBANESE NEED FOR, AND FAITH IN, FOREIGN INTERVENTION HAS ITS ROOTS IN THE VERY DISTANT PAST, BUT THE MODERN PERIOD BEGINS WITH 1840. IN PAST 137 YEARS THERE HAVE BEEN SUCCESSIVE INSTANCES OF EUROPEAN,  
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AMERICAN, SYRIAN AND EVEN ISRAELI INTERVENTION TO SAVE LEBANON, OR, MORE ACCURATELY, LEBANESE CHRISTIANS, FROM DISASTER. SUCH RESCUE OPERATIONS HAVE USUALLY BEEN NECESSITATED BY LESS ALTRUISTIC FISHING IN TROUBLED WATERS BY VARIOUS COUNTRIES, INCLUDING SOME OF THE WOULD-BE RESCUERS--SYRIA, ISRAEL, EGYPT, SAUDI ARABIA, IRAQ, LIBYA AND ALGERIA

COME TO MIND IMMEDIATELY. LEBANON HAS BEEN EVERYONE'S OPEN HUNTING GROUND FOR SO LONG THAT LEBANESE HAVE COME TO ACCEPT IT AS A FACT OF LIFE AND TO COUNT ON IT IN THEIR CALCULATIONS. TODAY, BOGGED DOWN IN THEIR CRISIS, THE LEBANESE ARE AGAIN LOOKING AVIDLY FOR HELP. HAVING LOST FAITH IN THE POWER AND/OR THE WILL OF OTHER WESTERN POWERS TO HELP THEM, THEY HAVE FASTENED ON U.S. AS DEUS EXMACHINA THAT WILL SAVE THEM FROM ALL THEIR TROUBLES, AS WE SUPPOSEDLY DID IN 1958.

3. THE CRISIS OF 1975-76, HOWEVER, ILLUSTRATED VERY NICELY THE LIMITS OF OUR POWER. IN 1958 THE UNITED STATES COULD OFFER A GAMUT OF SUPPORT TO THE CHAMOUN GOVERNMENT WHICH RANGED FROM FINANCING ELECTION CAMPAIGNS UP THROUGH HELP WITH DISPOSAL OF THE LEBANESE APPLE CROP, GRANT MILITARY ASSISTANCE AND, FINALLY, MILITARY INTERVENTION. WE WERE A POWER IN THE LAND.

4. TODAY THE MILITARY OPTION IS NO LONGER VIABLE, WE ARE OUT OF THE ELECTION BUSINESS AND WE ARE SELLING ARMS, NOT GIVING THEM AWAY. WE ARE REDUCED TO A MUCH MORE MODEST SCALE OF SUPPORT. IT IS VALUED, NEVERTHELESS, BECAUSE THE LEBANESE SO DESPERATELY NEED REASSURANCE AND WE ARE ONE OF THE FEW WESTERN POWERS TO PRODUCE SUBSTANTIAL HELP SO FAR.

5. IN THE POLITICAL FIELD WE CAN MAKE DECLARATIONS OF SUPPORT, INTERCEDE WITH OTHER POWERS, AND ARGUE  
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WITH THE OPPOSITION. WHILE THERE IS LITTLE OR NO SANCTION BEHIND SUCH EFFORTS, THEY OFTEN HAVE AN EFFECT BECAUSE THE LEBANESE ARE UNABLE TO CREDIT THE SIMPLICITY OF OUR ACTIONS AND MOTIVES. THEY WANT TO BELIEVE: WE ARE DEMONICALLY CLEVER AND PUSHING LEVERS IN ALL DIRECTIONS TO BRING THEM SAFELY TO SOME DESTINATION WE HAVE, IN OUR WISDOM, SELECTED FOR THEM. THE FACT THAT WE ARE WILLING TO SPEAK TO THE ISRAELIS OR SYRIANS ON THEIR BEHALF WEIGHTS HEAVILY WITH THEM. WE HAVE RECEIVED POSITIVE REVERBERATIONS FROM ALL SIDES, FOR INSTANCE, FROM OUR EFFORTS TO PROMOTE A CEASE-FIRE IN THE SOUTH LAST MONTH, AND OUR PROPAGATION OF THE SIX POINTS IN STATE 063039 HAS, SOMEWHAT TO OUR SURPRISE, HAD POSITIVE IMPACT ON CHAMOUNISTS AS WELL AS JUMBLATTIS.

6. IN ECONOMIC FIELD WE HAVE A WIDER RANGE OF THEORETICAL POSSIBILITIES. INDEED, A QUICK TALLY IS RATHER IMPRESSIVE AND INCLUDES: GRANT ECONOMIC AID

FOR RECONSTRUCTION, PL-480, HOUSING GUARANTEE PROGRAM,  
EXIM LOANS, HUMANITARIAN AID, AID TO AUB, ENCOURAGEMENT  
OF SAUDIS AND OTHERS TO BE FORTHCOMING, TAKING POSITIVE  
POSITIONS ON BILATERAL OR MULTILATERAL ECONOMIC  
ISSUES, AND ENCOURAGING U.S. BUSINESS TO RETURN HERE.  
WHILE THE IMPACT OF OUR USING ANY ONE OF THESE OPTIONS  
MAY BE MODEST IN SUBSTANTIVE TERMS, COLLECTIVELY  
AND PSYCHOLOGICALLY THEY ARE VERY IMPORTANT. AS WE  
HAVE NOTED BEFORE, THE LEBANESE MAN IN THE STREET  
NEEDS ASSURANCE THAT WE, AND OTHERS, ARE CONFIDENT  
ENOUGH ABOUT THEIR FUTURE TO DO SOMETHING CONCRETE  
FOR THEM. WE, AND THE GOL, HAVE GOTTEN MUCH MILEAGE  
FROM THE VISIT OF OUR AID MISSION IN JANUARY, FROM  
THE SECRETARY'S ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE \$50 MILLION  
PROGRAM, FROM THE SIGNING OF THE PL-480 AGREEMENT,  
FROM PUBLICITY ABOUT OUR DISCUSSION OF FUTURE AID  
PROGRAMS, INCLUDING THE HOUSING GUARANTEE PROGRAM,  
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AND FROM THE PORT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM. INDEED, WE ARE  
TOLD THAT THE PICTURES IN THE PRESS OF THE FIRST SHIPMENT  
OF MATERIEL FOR THE PORT LED MERCHANTS TO GO OUT AND  
PLACE ORDERS TO IMPORT NEW GOODS--THEY TOOK IT AS SUCH A  
FAVORABLE OMEN FOR THE FUTURE.

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W  
-----121117Z 052298 /11

R 120925Z MAY 77  
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4001  
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN  
AMEMBASSY CAIRO  
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS  
AMEMBASSY JIDDA  
USINT BAGHDAD

S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 BEIRUT 2258

EXDIS

7. MILITARILY, THERE IS THE PROSPECT OF FMS AND GRANT TRAINING. THE REAL NEEDS OF THE LEBANESE ARMY ARE SUCH THAT MEETING THEM WILL BE WELL BEYOND ANY PROGRAM WE ARE LIKELY TO APPROVE FOR THIS COUNTRY. AGAIN, HOWEVER, OUR WILLINGNESS TO HELP, EVEN MODESTLY, HAS A POSITIVE, PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECT. IT IS ANOTHER DEMONSTRATION OF CONFIDENCE. EX-PRESIDENT CHAMOUN, FOR INSTANCE, ASKED ME THE OTHER DAY IF WE REALLY WOULD HELP THE ARMY (HE CANNOT BELIEVE WE WILL) AND MY ASSURANCES WE WOULD APPARENTLY AFFECTED POSITIVELY HIS ATTITUDE TOWARD THE ARMY IN GENERAL.

8. IN SHORT, WHAT WE CAN HOPE TO DO HERE IS TO CONVINCE THE LEBANESE THAT WE, AND OTHERS, ARE WORKING ACTIVELY ON THEIR BEHALF, AND TO HOPE THIS WILL ENCOURAGE THEM TO SAVE THEMSELVES, WHICH ONLY THEY CAN DO. EXPRESSED IN DAY-TO-DAY POLITICAL TERMS, THIS MEANS THAT WE ARE ENGAGED IN A HANDHOLDING EXERCISE--TALKING TO THE VARIOUS FACTIONS (EXCEPT THE PALESTINIANS) AND ASSURING THEM OF OUR

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INTEREST IN THEIR POSITIONS AND OF OUR OPTIMISM REGARDING AN EVENTUAL NATIONAL RECONCILIATION.

9. BECAUSE WE HAVE NO SANCTION BEHIND SUCH TALK, WE MUST RELY LARGELY ON CHARM AND PERSUASION, WHICH WILL LAST AS LONG AS OUR BARAKA DOES. IT DID NOT WORK IN '75 AND '76, BUT NOTHING SHORT OF MILITARY INTERVENTION WOULD HAVE. SURPRISINGLY ENOUGH, IN SPITE OF A GENERAL CONVICTION THAT, IN THE WORDS OF THE FOREIGN MINISTER'S WIFE, WE "DROPPED LEBANON LIKE AN OLD SLIPPER," WE SEEM TO HAVE UNLIMITED BARAKA FOR THE MOMENT. IT WILL LAST UNTIL THEY REALIZE AGAIN WE ARE WEARING NO CLOTHES, I.E., WHEN AND IF FIGHTING INTERRUPTS AGAIN, AND AGAIN WE FAIL TO INTERVENE MILITARILY. IF THIS HAPPENS, THE "PLOT" THEORY--THAT THE U.S. IS BEHIND ALL THE TROUBLES OF LEBANON BECAUSE THIS SERVES OUR INTERESTS ELSEWHERE IN THE MIDDLE EAST--WILL REVIVE.

10. THERE SEEM TO BE FOUR CARDS WE CAN PLAY IN THE GAME AS IT IS SET UP TODAY: (1) DISPLAY OF INTEREST AND A WILLINGNESS TO ACT, (2) EVIDENCE OF IMPARTIALITY AND UNDERSTANDING, (3) EXUDATION OF CONFIDENCE, (4) SOMETHING MATERIAL TO OFFER. PLAYING THESE CARDS NECESSARILY MEANS A HIGH PROFILE, WITH ALL THAT IMPLIES IN TERMS

OF SECURITY PROBLEMS. WE CANNOT EXUDE CONFIDENCE AND SHOW A WILLINGNESS TO ACT IF THE CHIEF OF MISSION STAYS IN THE BOMB SHELTER. FURTHERMORE, IF WE ARE IN THE GAME, WE HAVE TO PLAY IT FULLY--THERE IS NO RESPECT SHOWN TO THE MAN WHO PASSES EVERY HAND.

11. IN DECIDING JUST HOW MUCH INTEREST TO DISPLAY AND HOW MUCH AID TO GIVE, IT WOULD BE USEFUL TO KNOW HOW IMPORTANT LEBANON IS TO US. IN 1957, FOSTER DULLES GOT PRESIDENT EISENHOWER TO DECLARE THAT THE INDEPENDENCE AND TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY OF JORDAN WERE VITAL TO THE  
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UNITED STATES. WE USED THE TERM "VITAL" PRETTY LOOSELY IN THOSE DAYS, BUT SHOWED WE MEANT IT WHEN WE LANDED IN LEBANON WHILE THE BRITISH FLEW TROOPS INTO AMMAN FOLLOWING THE IRAQI COUP IN 1958. WE DO NOT FEEL THE SAME ANYMORE. WE RESOLUTELY AVOIDED MILITARY INVOLVEMENT IN THE MOST RECENT LEBANESE CRISIS AND APPEARED READY TO LET THE COUNTRY GO DOWN THE DRAIN RATHER THAN INTERVENE. WOULD WE DO THE SAME WITH ISRAEL? EGYPT? JORDAN? WHERE DOES LEBANON FIT ON OUR SCALE OF NEAR EASTERN PRIORITIES THESE DAYS? IT IS WORTH THINKING ABOUT.

12. MEANWHILE, I THINK OUR POLICY HERE IS WORKING IN ONE SENSE. WE HAVE WREAKED NO MIRACLES, BUT THERE ARE SOME SMALL SIGNS OF INCREASED CONFIDENCE--NEW ROLLING SHUTTERS GOING UP, REOPENING OF COMMERCIAL ESTABLISHMENTS, MORE SHIPS CALLING, MORE INTEREST IN IMPORTS, MORE POLICE ON THE STREETS, ETC. ON OTHER HAND, SEPARATIST SENTIMENT REMAINS STRONG AND WE ARE STILL VERY FAR FROM A NATIONAL RECONCILIATION, WITH THE NON-IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CAIRO ACCORD BEING A MAJOR CAUSE OF DELAY. THE POWDER IS STILL IN THE KEG, AND THE LEBANESE ARE COUNTING ON US TO MAKE SURE THAT NO ONE LIGHTS THE FUSE.  
PARKER

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## Message Attributes

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